The Debt of America to the Genius of French Art

Some Reflections Suggested by the Gift of Paintings and Drawings Made by Artists in Paris to Their Colleagues in New York.

By ROYAL CORTISSOZ.

The opening of the new year in art is marked by an event of unusually felicitous significance, the inauguration at the Ritz-Carlton to-night of an exhibition for the benefit of the families of those French artists who have gone to the war. Most conspicuous on the walls is the huge decoration which for a few days was believed to have been lost, Besnard's "La Paix," painted at the order of his government for the Peace Palace at The Hague. Around it are displayed some fourscore paintings and drawings offered by the Fraternité des Artistes of France to the Americans who last year made an exhibition of works by themselves, donated for the benefit of the same fund which is now to profit again by their good will. Mr. Whitney Warren, the architect, who has shown in divers important ways his sympathy for the cause of the Allies, will preside over to-night's ceremonies, which will include, by the way, French *chansons* and monologues, and he will speak for a number of organizations. This undertaking is backed by the Museum of French Art, the American Artists' Committee of One Hundred, the Société des Architectes Diplomés par le Gouvernement Français, the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects and the Alliance Française. It is an occasion to rejoice every foe of German "Kultur," for it means a tribute to one of the richest springs of that civilization which German "Kultur" comes to destroy.

Elsewhere in The Tribune to-day, in the pages of the Graphic Section, there may be found a generous selection from the tokens of French courtesy and *camaraderie* which make this exhibition an affair of sentiment as well as of art. Our reproductions enforce more eloquently than words the charmingly intimate and personal note which the Fraternité has characteristically chosen to strike. These paintings and drawings make no pretence of being the carefully pondered works usually prepared for the Salon. They are the spontaneous expressions of familiar studio life, jets of emotion flung off because the artists were in the mood for them and could not help themselves, or souvenirs of happy hours of study. There is grave thought in some of them, as in Roll's "In Belgium," and there is poignant symbolism, as in the fine "Victory" of Lucien Jonas. But in the collection as a whole one perceives simply the generous friendship of the French artist—which touches us the more as we realize, amid a throng of golden memories, that it is no new thing.

SON EMINENCE GRISE.
(From the painting by Gerome.)

What We Have Learned from France.

The training of an artist is one-third a matter of the rudiments and two-thirds a matter of the spirit in which they are worked into his character. For him, if he be a true artist, the laws of art are sacred, but ask him what he remembers with the most gratitude from the time of his pupilage and he will tell you that it is the stimulus given him first by his master and then by his surroundings. What is it that the young American returned from a few years in Paris will give as the secret of his happiness there? The "atmosphere" of things, the spirit of a life led with complete devotion to the interests of art. I remember visiting an artist friend who had left New York for France to execute several commissions which could be carried out in that country more conveniently than at home. One of his sculptures had received a medal in the Salon a few days before. He told me that artists, some of them celebrated men much older than himself and personally quite unknown to him, had come all the way to his studio to congratulate him and express their appreciation. He was walking on air. It was not merely their praise that had moved him, it was their unselfish, hearty encouragement, and, above all, the heightened sense they gave him of the solidarity of the profession. I asked him when he was coming home. He did not know. There was something about work in Paris that kept one so tingling with happiness and ambition. That was long ago, and he has not come home yet.

If the reader will look back over those chapters in the history of American art which relate to its traffic with European schools he will be struck by the emergence in every one of them of this feeling for atmosphere, for an ideal not definable in any hard and dry formula. The American sculptors who in an earlier generation emulated the antique were influenced, really, by the broad tradition of Rome. When Duveneck went to Munich and developed the enthusiasm for Rembrandtesque painting which he transmitted to some of his clever juniors, he promoted a new "manner" amongst us, but performed a more lasting service in starting the cult for paint as paint. The influence of Paris upon our artists has been of a similar character. It has implied, at different periods, different surface traits. "Bill" Hunt's initiation into the spell of the Barbizon group reacted upon our landscape school. We owe to the men of that epoch a good deal of what is best in the romantic naturalism which many of our painters are practising to-day. Carolus-Duran gave Sargent his first impetus, which is to say that he is the father of a certain type of our portraiture. In Paris the American has acquired—not always to his essential advantage—the trick of the Salon picture. From Paris came the seeds of that Impressionism through which an American like Twachtman could rival Monet himself. In short, we have brought back from France many a recipe for the making of a particular kind of work of art. But for the present purpose all that may be left, we repeat, upon the surface. The more important thing is that the American artist sojourning in Paris for his education has there had the opportunity, at all events, to go to the root of the matter. In Paris the whole spirit of the world of art has tended toward one thing, to make the painter, the sculptor, master of his craft.

It is an ideal by itself, this ideal of work well done. That it has been misunderstood sadly enough is patent to any student of the subject who recalls the first phase of Franco-American intercourse in matters of art. The young fellows who then came back from contact with Parisian ideas were all for a queer and arid hypothesis which they called "art for art's sake," and they committed innumerable jejune sins in its name. They knew nothing about that "rectitude of art" of which Ingres had made so much. They were a little late upon the scene for his ministry and they missed his point. They thought, simply, that technique had something talismanic about it, and if they had attained to a certain manual adroitness they felt that their futures were secure. Many of them have since got over that little error. The truth is that their masters had never intended them to be so cocksure. They, Gerome, Carolus, Bonnat and the rest, forgot to make allowance for the American temperament. They were satisfied if they set their disciples upon the right path. Well, in the long run, their confidence was not misplaced, and perhaps, too, the very exaggeration of technical dexterity in the mind of the American beginner was a good thing. It helped while it harmed. It deepened in him the indispensable conviction that a picture, to be worth while, must be well painted.

There, in a nutshell, is the story of our unpayable debt to French art. It does no violence to the memory of those Americans who flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century. They were men of high ideals, who steadfastly endeavored to establish the best principles of painting as they understood them. Nevertheless, it needed the pictures at the Centennial to open men's eyes to the more advanced ideas seething abroad, and when the new generation of the 70's turned to Paris for inspiration it was an-hungered and a-thirst for a broader and more thoroughgoing conception of technique. The leaders there nobly responded to the young man at their door. He was a stranger and they took him in. In the big classes, characteristic of the French capital, he was put through a rigid course of discipline, and this was trebled in value by the criticisms of the masters. How good, how sympathetic, how royally helpful the latter were! It is in recognition of the deep sentiment that attaches to their names in countless American studios that we print to-day the portraits of one or two of those open-handed Frenchmen. There is no end to the legendary lore that has gathered about them—Bonnat, Laurens, Merson, Carolus-Duran, Gerome, Lefebvre, Bouguereau and a dozen others. And the anecdotes of which they are the heroes are always anecdotes of the wise and cheering counsellor, the friend as well as the master, speaking the right word at the right moment. To them, far more than to historic monuments, the American student owed the "atmosphere" which gave him confidence and courage. In illustration of what they also gave him, of a more practical nature, to aid him toward his goal, we reproduce the picture which is, possibly, better representative than any other of the French standard of that halcyon time—Gerome's "Son Eminence Grise."

It is an old-fashioned picture to our modern eyes. A lot of water has gone under the bridges since it was painted, and the artist of to-day, exercising a different method as regards brushwork and color, sees his subject also in a different way. But consider, merely, the manner in which this work of art is put together. Have all the subsequent developments in modern art produced a man capable of teaching the author of this picture anything about composition? The late Augustus Saint-Gaudens cited "Son Eminence Grise" to the present writer as the most astounding masterpiece of arrangement in later French art. Consider, further, the drawing in the thing, hard, if you like, and absolutely academic, but magnificently sound. We say nothing of the color. No one ever suspected Gerome of being a colorist. But that was a purely personal limitation, and, besides, did not affect the fundamental lesson which he had to convey. His purpose, like that of his fellow masters, was to make the young American see the power and the dignity of honest picture making, to inculcate in him such a conscience for composition, for drawing, for technique, in a word, that he could not but lift his whole idea of art upon a higher plane. To be a competent workman should be the artist's first ambition. The French studios were vitalized by that principle, and from them there flowed across the Atlantic to these shores an influence without which genius itself would be at a loss.

Our gratitude would have to be deep indeed if all that we had to reckon with was just an influence, just a spur to our energies. But what makes us immeasurably thankful is the consciousness of all the grace and charm that has accompanied the tangible service. I recall a perfect day spent years ago at the Villa Medici in Rome. In memory I can see M. Guillaume as I saw him then, a tall and stately figure in the great shadowy salon, frock coated, grave in conversation, *ancien régime* in his demeanor, as befitted the director of an historic institution. Under the oaks in the *bosco* I encountered the venerable Hebert, silvery haired, wrapped in a vast cloak despite the sunshine, and as absorbed as a youth in the painting of a picture which I was to meet again, in after years, at an exhibition in Paris. In and out of the old palazzo, idling in the summer air or hurrying back to their studios in the further reaches of the garden, were the young lions of French art, the winners of the Prix de Rome. It is an exquisite memory of courtly hospitality, of kindling talk, of a bright, intensely humanized aspiration toward beauty. The background was monumental. The spirit of the whole episode was natural, artless, the spirit of many an atelier I have known in Paris. In Paris it has never flagged, and there it can never die. Once more it has manifested itself in the fine gesture with which the Fraternité has thanked the American artists who put their shoulders to the wheel a year ago. Is not the gift gracious? Is it not superbly French?

J. L. GEROME.
(From the portrait by Dagnan-Bouveret.)

JEAN-PAUL LAURENS IN HIS STUDIO.
(From a photograph.)

Random Impressions of Art in Current Exhibitions

Winslow Homer's Water Colors at the Century Club—The First Appearance of "The Eclectics," a Group of Painters and Sculptors—Wood Engravings.

From now on the exhibitions will increase portentously in number. There is something new in every gallery. The American Art Association is offering Mr. Thomas B. Clarke's interesting collection of textiles and platters. The Anderson galleries show early miniatures and manuscripts, Oriental and European, belonging to M. Leonce Rosenberg, of Paris, and by him consigned to Tonying & Co., in this city.

At the Daniel gallery there is an exhibition of "American Art of To-day," works by Ryder, Weir, Prendergast, Manigault and others. The Montross gallery is filled with paintings by Cezanne. That artist, and a number of other Frenchmen, may also be studied in an exhibition just opened at the Knoedler gallery. The National Arts Club opens on Wednesday evening an exhibition of works by painter members. Metal work and jewelry by Marie Zimmermann are to be seen at the Ehrich gallery. The 57th Street gallery shows paintings by Engelbert Gminska. At the rooms of the Professional Woman's League that organization for the first time is making an exhibition of works by members. The Association of Women Painters and Sculptors opens on Wednesday evening, at the Municipal Art Gallery, an exhibition of the designs received in its postcard design competition. Paintings of the Arctic and Antarctic, by Frank W. Stokes, are at the Arlington gallery. The Goupil gallery shows portraits by Miss Betty Peters, and landscapes by Mr. Richard Montague.

The walls of the picture gallery at the Century Club are hung with a goodly number of Winslow Homer's water colors. Here, indeed, is a feast for those who are privileged to see them. A large portion of the paintings shown were done in Bermuda and the Bahamas, where Homer worked so much, and are full of the wonderful deep blue of West Indian waters. Then there are a few pictures of the coast of Maine and of the Adirondacks and the Canadian woods.

The West Indian scenes are all striking in color. Perhaps the two which contain negroes are the most effective in this way. The one called "The Sponge Diver" shows the back of the wet body of a magnificent chocolate negro up to his waist in the intense blue sea, while his right hand clings to the stern of a gleaming white rowboat. The visitor wonders, incidentally, why there are not more painters who realize the great pictoral possibilities of the negro. "After the Tornado" is a tragic subject, done also in vital colors. A great negro, stripped to the waist, lies dead on the beach beside the fragments of a skiff. The atmosphere of the picture is calm. Only in the few trees on the horizon to the right does one get the vivid impression that a great wind has recently passed over the place. The little "Gulf Stream" is interesting because it apparently is a study, or first idea, for the well known picture at the Metropolitan Museum. In this water color it is a white man, fully clothed, who lies upon the deck, instead of a half-naked negro as in the larger painting. The composition is not so good, and the effect as a whole is not nearly so effective.

A highly keyed picture is "Stowing Sail," which shows a boat rising and falling with the gentle swell of a summer sea. The movement is superb and the craftsmanship of the finest. One of the Maine coast pictures, "Prout's Neck, Evening," is highly decorative. It is composed of parallel bands; gray for the sea, the palest of yellow-gray for the lower sky, and a mass of dark gray cloud at the top. In it Homer has put all the beauty and calm of the evening. Other pictures include a wonderful leaping trout, one or two woodland scenes, and a fine "Saguenay Fisherman" poised on a rock in the midst of the rushing, swirling rapids of that wild and romantic river.

P. A. J. DAGNAN-BOUVERET.
(From the portrait by himself.)

It is pleasant to come upon the pictures now shown at the Folsom gallery. They make the first exhibition of a new group of artists who call themselves the Eclectics. There are eight painters and four sculptors, and one has the feeling that they are good friends, for the number of portraits of members of the group which are hung against the dull red fifteenth century patterned velvet give the room rather the effect of a family gathering.

The talent of Teresa Bernstein is essentially for color and decoration. Her "Opera Night" shows a group of spectators in deep shadow in the foreground, and in the background the brilliantly lighted, crowded stage of the theatre, almost dazzling in color. She has well caught the effect of silk-clothed figures revealed in the glare of the footlights. The picture called "Caprice" is rich and fantastic, a great mass of trees with a scarlet figure to the right. The colors glow like some wonderful black opal. The work of James Britton is of quite a different character. Perhaps his "Portrait Sketch" is the most effective. Sketches are often of greater interest than finished paintings, for their greater spontaneity. This one is fine in handling and highly satisfactory in color. We like also his portrait of Mrs. Britton, painted in an accomplished manner and somewhat suggestive of sixteenth century tradition.

Guy Pene du Bois contributes four of his satires with extraordinary titles. His pictures have a humor of the kind that sends the mind back to Daumier. They also are good in color. The best is the "Automobile Tires," showing a man and a woman seated in chairs well down in the foreground. There are three canvases by Philip L. Hale, two decorative pictures and a portrait. "Wistaria" and "Autumn Fruit" are delightful, light in color, with figures of women in 1860 costumes against vines and trees. The design in both is pleasing and the tone charmingly cool. The portrait of an old sea captain is fine in conception but does not seem to be so successful as a whole. Perhaps the hands, which are full of character, have been emphasized at the expense of the head.

C. Bertram Hartman's "Four Seasons" are a joy to behold, so full are they of color, of decorative design and of spontaneous "joie de vivre." Mr. Hartman paints in what has been called the "confetti" technique; that is, he uses small square spots of color. This manner, when carried to extremes, is apt to be disagreeable, but his use of it is decidedly persuasive. The landscape parts of these decorations are picturesque. The figures are graceful and well placed. His use of a brilliant flamingo red in each picture is clever. There are several examples of the art of Henry Salem Hubbell. His portrait of Charles Reiffel is one of the best portraits we have seen this winter. That of C. Bertram Hartman is also exceptionally good. "Ice on the Water Pitcher," a picture of a girl snuggling in bed under a gay patchwork quilt, is striking in color and has decorative qualities. It is rather better than "A Snug Little Kingdom," which is the same type of painting. Mr. Hubbell uses his brush with skill and conviction.

George Luks contributes but one painting, a portrait of James Britton, very masculine in handling. It was painted by the light of the full moon and is called simply "The Moonlight Portrait." Among Martha Walter's works are two delightful beach scenes. The color is charming, almost iridescent, like mother-of-pearl, and they are full of outdoor atmosphere.

The sculpture of the exhibition includes the work of Marie Apel, Solon Borglum, John Flanagan and Mahonri Young. It consists for the most part of portrait busts, all of interest. It is a pity that they are placed on a low table, for it is difficult to examine them with ease or any great degree of satisfaction.

At the City Club there are a number of canvases by Mrs. Johansen, better known as M. Jean McLane, well worth seeing. There are several of her characteristic pictures of children. "Mother and Child" contains one of the jolliest and most delightful of babies. The picture called "Portrait of a Baby" has a strong and effective note in the black waist of the mother. The coloring of the whole, blue, black and white, gives to it a decided decorative quality. Then there is a charming child's portrait called by the odd title "With Doll." In many ways the finest thing shown is the portrait of Albert Spalding. The young violinist is placed in a rather unusual but agreeable manner quite low on the canvas. The coloring is all in tones of brown. There is an earnestness of handling, an understanding of character, in this which make it an absorbing portrait. Across the room is a large decorative piece entitled "Autumn Breezes," done in light browns. It shows a girl, with wind-blown dress, posed against a grapevine. The pattern is charming and the workmanship, as in all of Mrs. Johansen's paintings, is fresh and free.

Why is it that etching, engraving and the other arts of printing from metal plates have an established popularity, while the sister arts of lithography and wood engraving, in this country at least, are comparatively neglected? One would think that the softness and color suggestiveness of these latter forms should make them dear to the hearts of all who are artistically inclined. It is exhilarating to visit the Ehrich gallery and study the prints now on exhibition there. There are examples of the work of many British and Scotch masters and of a few Americans.

The only Continental represented is Fantin-Latour, of whose work there are several noteworthy examples. His prints have great beauty of light and shade, are strongly suggestive of color and possess a lyric quality which puts him among the great masters of the art. Two of his loveliest pictures are shown: "Duo des Troyens," beautiful in its light and shade, and "L'etoile du Soir," inspired by Tannhäuser and redolent of the mystic beauty of night. Here, too, is a print of his rarest lithograph, "Bouquet de Roses," his only still life.

Frank Brangwyn contributes two large and two small lithographs. The largest and most striking is the "Tower Bridge." It is done in quite his usual manner, with his masterly drawing and knowledge of composition and the use of masses of black. The most interesting, however, is the "Mowers," unusual in subject, strong in drawing, and inspiritingly rhythmic in line. Next to the latter hangs a large print by Spencer Pryse, one of the new British lithographers. It shows "The Kaiser and His Staff at a Field Day," and was done in Germany just before the beginning of the war. It is superb in handling, and Mr. Pryse has well caught the Teutonic type. He is a welcome newcomer.

Ten of Will Rothenstein's lithographic portraits are shown. They are all of men famous in the arts and are brilliant in character study and uncommonly clever in the manner in which the few lines of which they are composed are drawn. James Cadenhead, a Scotch artist as yet unknown in this country, shows himself a master of drawing on stone in his two prints. They are skilful in the handling of masses and possess a remarkable atmospheric quality.

It is interesting to find among the wood engravings in this exhibition several examples of the work of the Englishman, T. Sturge Moore, less known here as an artist than as a poet and writer on art. It must be twenty years and more since engravings by him in the shortlived "Dial," published in London by Charles Shannon, Charles Ricketts and their circle, brought him into notice, and this is, we believe, the first time that any of his prints have been exhibited in New York. He is an accomplished craftsman, very skilful and firm in touch, and there is always a rich artistic feeling in his management of contrasting masses of black and white. Perhaps the finest of the three prints at present shown is the "Theseus Finding the Body of Phædra." It has an impressive element of mystery, showing that Mr. Moore is as imaginative as he is decorative. An even larger body of his work would be welcome on this occasion. Among the other exhibits the blocks by Timothy Cole and Henry Wolf, reproducing paintings by various masters, are delightfully conspicuous.

Although, as has been indicated above, the art of the wood engraver has not the broad-based position in this country that it deserves, there are signs that the tradition once so potent with us is devoutly preserved in certain quarters and may some day again come into its own. The prints at the Ehrich gallery offer one testimony in this direction. Another appears at the Camera Club, where Mr. Henry Wolf has an exhibition to himself. He presents a large number of engravings after well known paintings by American and foreign artists and a few original designs. In them all he well sustains the tradition aforesaid, the tradition built up when the illustrated magazines were awaiting the halftone process, and, while they waited, were only too glad to employ the wood engraver. It used to be said, in those days, which witnessed his last struggles with the competition of the newer and cheaper process, that he had dug his own grave through taking too many liberties with the pictures he was asked to reproduce. Painters and illustrators complained that the engraver, even when pretty accurate, imposed an individual quality peculiar to himself upon the works intrusted to him. He became an interpreter where he should have been nothing more than a mirror. As a matter of fact, his status would have remained untouched to this day if the halftone had not cost less, and the explanation is simple. The American wood engraver has had a way of being an artist.

That is Mr. Wolf's title. He handles his instrument with the greatest possible skill, producing prints of an extraordinary beauty as monotones, and, into the bargain, subtly evocative of the colors in the paintings which he reproduces. Witness his block from the famous Marquand Vermeer at the Metropolitan Museum, the "Woman Opening a Casement." The tones and textures in the work are given with amazing fidelity. The basin and ewer on the table, though translated into black and white, gleam with the very quality of metal. And in a block like that after Wyant's "In the Adirondacks" he renders the depth and misty coloration of the original with the instinctive feeling of the veritable landscape painter. Yes, he is an interpreter, but he respects the integrity of his subject. When he reproduces Weir's "Pan and the Wolf," printed in "Harper's" last summer, he makes the block a little monument to his own art, but he preserves in all its purity the subtle distinction which is Weir's. Of the three prints of his own conceiving perhaps the most satisfactory is "Lower New York, Misty Evening," an excellent composition, filled with the silvery tone in which the great skyscrapers swim at such a time.

LA PAIX.
(From the painting by Albert Besnard. Copyright by W. F. Paris.)

LEON BONNAT.
(From the portrait by Etcheverry.)